CLAIMS:

We claim:

SUB A1 1. A method comprising:

2   organizing concepts according to their meaning into a

3 lexicon, said lexicon defining elements of a semantic space; and

4   providing a meaning differentiator in response to an input

5 query, said meaning differentiator presenting a set of concepts

6 from said lexicon that are related to said query.

1   2. A method according to claim 1 wherein said organizing

2 includes:

3   determining a semantic distance from a first concept and a

4 second concept, said semantic distance representing the closeness

5 in meaning between said first concept and said second concept;

6 and

7   determining the relationship between said first concept and

8 said second concept.

1   3. A method according to claim 1 further comprising:

2   presenting results of a search conducted on a target data

3 set in accordance with said set of concepts.

SUB A2 1 4. A method according to claim 4 wherein said search is

2 conducted by ranking elements of said target data set according

3 to conceptual relevance.

1   5.   A method according to claim 3 further comprising:

2   refining said search results by filtering for desired

3 concepts from said set of concepts, said refined search results

4 excluding elements of said target data set pertaining to

5 undesired concepts.

1   6.   A method according to claim 1 wherein organizing

2 includes:

3   attaching meanings to elements in a predefined data set.

SUB A3 7.   A method according to claim 2 further comprising:

2   determining which meanings are closely related by defining a

3 radius of semantic distance about a given meaning and excluding

4 meanings falling in distances beyond said radius.

1   8.   A method according to claim 2 further comprising:

2   attaching meanings to elements in a predefined data set; and

3   calculating scores for said elements according to the

4 semantic distance between meanings attached to said elements and

5 other meanings.

1   9.   A method according to claim 1 wherein said meaning

2 differentiator includes a set of meanings that could be

3 interpreted of said query or portion thereof.

1   10.   A method according to claim 1 wherein providing a

2 meaning differentiator includes interpreting at least a portion

3 of said query into specific meanings.

1   11.   A method according to claim 10 further comprising:

2   enabling a user to select at least one meaning from said set

3 of meanings.

3

1   12.   A method according to claim 1 wherein said elements are

2 related by a connection, said connections including a lateral

3 bind, a kind of and a part of.

4   **3**

1   13.   A method according to claim 12 wherein said connection

2 has an associated strength representing the degree to which said

3 elements are related.

Sub A4

1   14.   A method according to claim 2 wherein said meanings may

2 be marked as at least one of a geographical location, offensive,

3 unique instance, timely and a proper noun.

5   **4**

1   15.   A method according to claim 13 wherein said strength

2 from a first element to a second element may be different from

3 the strength from said second element to said first element.

1   16.   A method according to claim 6 wherein said predefined

2 data set is the target data set.

1   17. A method according to claim 6 wherein said elements are

2   subject nodes and said predefined data set is a hierarchy of

3   subjects.

SUB A5>   18. A method comprising:

2   organizing concepts according to their meaning into a

3   lexicon, said lexicon defining elements of a semantic space;

4   providing a meaning differentiator in response to an input

5   query, said meaning differentiator presenting a set of concepts

6   from said lexicon that are related to said query;

7   determining a semantic distance from a first concept and a

8   second concept, said semantic distance representing the closeness

9   in meaning between said first concept and said second concept;

10   determining the relationship between said first concept and

11   said second concept; and

12   presenting results of a search conducted on a target data

13   set in accordance with said set of concepts.

1   19. An article comprising a computer readable medium having

2   instructions stored thereon which when executed cause:

3   organizing concepts according to their meaning into a

4   lexicon, said lexicon defining elements of a semantic space; and

5   providing a meaning differentiator in response to an input

6   query, said meaning differentiator presenting a set of concepts

7   from said lexicon that are related to said query.

1   20. A method of searching a network of information sources

2   comprising:

3   receiving as input a search query; and

4   searching a semantic space for data pertaining to concepts

5   close in meaning to said search query.

1   21. A method according to claim 20 wherein searching

2   includes:

3   positioning data from said information sources into a

4   semantic space.

SUB A6> 22. A method according to claim 21 further comprising:

2   enabling a user to select at least one meaning from said set

3   of meanings; and

4   refining the results of said search by excluding said

5   pertaining data that relates to undesired concepts, said

6   undesired concepts excluded by inputting said selected meanings

7   and searching said search results for the pertaining data that is

8   semantically close to said selected meaning.

1   23. A method according to claim 20 wherein said information

2   sources include documents

                        11   10
1   24. A method according to claim 23 wherein said documents

2   include documents accessible via the world-wide web.

ADD A7>